RACIALISATION AND PUBLICNESS IN AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

African Studies Centre & St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 27-28 June, 2019.

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE the Call for Papers and Panels for a two-day Conference on 'Racialisation and Publicness in Africa and the African Diaspora' which will be held at the University of Oxford, from 27-28 June, 2019.

From the fatal shooting of the 17-year old Trayvon Martin in Florida, United States, and the recent deportation threats faced by the Windrush generation in Britain to the continued practices of dehumanisation experienced by black Africans in Mauritania and contemporary resistance to Empire and its devastating consequences as symbolised by the #RhodesMustFall movement in South Africa and Oxford, racialisation of black people in Africa and in the Diaspora and the attendant (counter-) hegemonic reactions and/or resistance to racialisation have transplanted the DuBoisian twentieth-century problem into that of the twenty-first century.

Against this backdrop, this conference will address the contemporary problem of racialisation in Africa and the African Diaspora (old and new). The conference organisers are particularly interested in how to approach and analyse racial phenomena in terms of the processes by which ideas about race are constructed, given meaning, and acted upon (Murji and Solomons 2005) in public life and how people of African descent are racialised as the Other, and so become, 'objects of knowledge, power, and cultural criticism' (Gilroy 1993: 5).

We are interested in papers and panels that examine why and how racial identities and categories are constructed, imagined and inscribed (in)to the social, political and economic processes, practices and relationships in Africa and the African Diaspora—with significant consequences and implications for human life as well as for what Achille Mbembe describes in *Critique of Black Reason* (2017) as the global 'in-common.'

The conference is partly informed by Fanonian insight on the interlacing of the body and race, given that, by 'marking population groups' (Mbembe 2017), 'racialization [largely] relies on bodily attributes' (Fassin 2011). How do different modes of racialising people provoke what Paul Gilroy (1987) describes as 'vernacular cosmopolitan conversation and synchronized action among the victimized'? How do reactions to racialisation enable the processes of re-humanising the dehumanised?

The conference will examine how groups, relationships, encounters, institutions, social processes, thought, etc. are racialised in continental Africa and in the Black Diaspora, including how these processes of racialisation are both enacted or performed in public and *public-ised*. Thus, we are interested in papers and panels that focus on how racialisation is (re)configured, (re)determined and transformed by publicness. Defined by Cheah (1995) as one of the 'redemptive ideas of modernity', publicness has become critical in conceiving of and understanding racialisation in modern terms. In the light of this, the organisers invite panels and papers that explore the ways in which publicness—in its manifold manifestations—problematises and/or *complexifies* 'the self-evident link between critical agency and autonomy' in Africa and the African Diaspora. In seeking to explore, in their

multivocality and intersectionality, the local, global and transnational experiences of racialisation in *global Africa,* we welcome papers and panels that examine how the idea of publicness can be mobilised as 'the normative function of mediating between the universal and the particular' (ibid) in the experiences of people of African descent in the *longue durée*.

SUBMISSIONS & DEADLINES

We welcome paper and panel proposals from academics, researchers and postgraduate students on all dimensions of racialisation and publicness in relation to, and/or, in the context of the following:

Empire, colonialism, postcolonialism and the decolonial turn; Enlightenment and modernity; Ethnicity, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, identities; state and governmental institutions and forms; The black Atlantic and the black Mediterranean – slave trade, slavery, and discrimination, past and present; Black Europe; Black Asia; the Arab world and Africa; Caribbean and Bermuda; spatial relations, segregation, cities, communities and housing; bodies, embodiment and the transformation of privacy; history, memory, memorialisation, commemoration; intersection of racialisation, gender, womanhood, and/or sexual identities; class, capital and neoliberalism; (im)migration, space, territoriality and temporality; law, political power and politics; law, legal system, crime, criminal justice and policing; black thinkers and knowledge production; the archive; "post-racial" formations and discourses; violence, terror and fundamentalism; religion and religiosity; music and performance; literature, language and cultural practices; media, communication and the social media.

Prospective participants are welcome to propose individual papers, or panels of three or more papers on a specific theme. Panel proposals (title + 500 word max abstract) should be sent to the organisers at events@africa.ox.ac.uk by 10 December, 2018. It should include at least two agreed papers. Individual paper proposals (title + 300 word max abstract) should be sent to the same email address by 30 November, 2018. Notifications on successful panel and paper proposals will be sent by January 15, 2019.

The organisers will be happy to provide official letters of invitation to assist participants in securing visas to the UK.

There is no conference registration fee. However participants who wish to attend the Opening Day Dinner will pay £35 each.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- Professor Achille Mbembe, WISER, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, author of *Critique of Black Reason*
- Professor Faye V. Harrison, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA, author of *Decolonizing Anthropology*

Conference is supported by: The Rhodes Chair in Race Relations, African Studies Centre, St Antony's College, Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx), and The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH).

Convenor: Wale Adebanwi, Rhodes Professor of Race Relations, African Studies Centre, Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, University of Oxford, UK.

For enquiries, please contact Conference Administrator, Alexa Virdi: events@africa.ox.ac.uk